



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

MODERN LANGUAGE NOTES.

Baltimore, May, 1892.

THREE UNIQUE ELIZABETHAN DRAMAS.

I.

THE work of George Gascoigne, the well-known author of 'The Steele Glas,' offers several points of interest to the investigator. Although a man of strong individuality, and for the most part working along well-defined lines, his versatility is his most striking trait. He seemed to feel a premonition of those quickening impulses which were to make the literature of the next two generations the greatest that England has produced, and we find him, so to speak, looking about for the best means and models by which to perpetuate his literary fame. As a result, Gascoigne has left us a larger number of "first attempts" than any other author in the annals of English literature, and the points of his contact with the history of that literature are many and important. This note will deal solely with the three dramas of Gascoigne, which possess this quality in common, that each is a unique example of a distinct species of the drama and the earliest specimen of its class.

We shall begin with a consideration of "Jocasta." This tragedy, which purports to have been "translated [from the Greek of Euripides] and digested into Acts by George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmarsh," was presented at Gray's Inn, as we learn by the title, in 1566,¹ and has been recorded by Collier as "the second dramatic performance in our language in blank verse."² "Jocasta" is a version of the "Phoenissae" and was "the first attempt to follow up the classical path opened by Gorboduc."³ As Warton long ago declared:

"It is partly a paraphrase, and partly an abridgement of the Greek tragedy. There are many omissions, retrenchments and transpo-

sitions, [although] the chorus, the characters and the substance of the story are entirely retained and the tenor of the dialogue is often preserved through whole scenes."⁴

Warton devotes considerable space to a comparison of Gascoigne's paraphrase with a literal translation of the "Phoenissae," and concludes that

"Our translators thought the many mythological and historical allusions in the Greek chorus too remote and unintelligible to be exhibited in English."⁵

This points to a scholarly and intelligent attempt on the part of the joint authors to adapt the Greek drama to the exigencies of an English performance, and Gascoigne has accordingly been credited by Collier with "the first-known attempt to introduce a Greek play upon the English stage."⁶

Now, from Gascoigne's own words we must infer that his knowledge of Greek was extremely limited,⁷ and we cannot but feel surprised at the selection of the "Phoenissae" for translation, and that so serious an attempt as the reproduction of a Greek tragedy in English should have been made so early in the history of our drama. On consulting Prof. Mahaffy, we learn that "no piece of Euripides has been more frequently copied and quoted than the Phoenissae."⁸ To say nothing of the modern versions of Racine, Schiller and Alfieri, there were parodies by Aristophanes, Strattis and Novius, and a free translation by Attius. The "Thebais" of Statius is on the same subject as is the "Thebaid" of Seneca, which is a compound of "the fragments of an Œdipus at Colonus and a Phoenissae."⁹ Before Gascoigne's play there was probably at least one French version, and Lodovico Dolce's "Giocasta," which the author describes as *gia di Euripide invenzione et hora nuova parto mio*, had appeared in 1549.¹⁰ Of the nature of Dolce's play I can not speak at first hand; but there is no reason to believe that it differs materially from the bulk of its class. In the words of Mr. J. A. Symonds:

⁴ Warton, p. 302. ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 304. ⁶ Hist. of Dram. Poetry, iii, p. 8. ⁷ Adventures of Master Ferdinando Ieronimi, Hazl. ed. i, p. 429. ⁸ Hist. of Classical Greek Lit., i, p. 364. ⁹ 'Sh's Predecessors in the English Drama' by J. A. Symonds, p. 218.

¹⁰ Dolce's "Giocasta" is reprinted in vol. vi of the Teatro Antico Italiano.

¹ Langbaine says that "Jocasta" was printed as early as 1556 in quarto. This is probably a mistake. See 'Dramatic Poets,' ed. 1691, p. 231.

² Hist. of Dramatic Poetry, iii, pp. 6-11 and Warton, 'Hist. of Engl. Poetry,' iii, p. 70.

³ Herford, 'The Literary Relations of England and Germany in the Seventeenth century,' p. 150.

"Every tragic scene which the Italians of the Renaissance set forth upon the board of Rome or Florence or Ferrara was a transcript of Seneca. Following this lead our English scholars went to school with Seneca beneath the ferule of Italian ushers."¹¹

During the earliest years of the reign of Elizabeth the popularity of Seneca was unexampled. Between 1559 and 1566 several English authors translated him,¹² among them Gascoigne's intimate, Alexander Nevyle, whose version of "Ædipus" was written in 1560, although not printed until 1581.¹³ The "Thebais" itself was translated by Thomas Newton but probably too late to have had any effect upon Gascoigne's work.¹⁴

In the midst of so strong a Senecan and Italian influence, we are not surprised to learn that Gascoigne's version of Euripides is a literal translation of Dolce's Italian version of Seneca's imitation of the "Phoenissae"; and that only "the choral odes are in part original."¹⁵ Besides the closeness of the English play to its Italian original, for which I must take the word of Prof. Mahaffy and Mr. Symonds,¹⁶ both have called attention to the fact that the *paidagogos* or "gouverneur to the Queenes sonnes" is called *Bailo* in Gascoigne's play, the regular Venetian title for a tutor, and the word used by Dolce.¹⁷

This is not the place in which to expatiate on the Senecan drama, a dreary exotic happily incapable of acclimatization in English soil. "Jocasta" exhibits all the leading features of its species: "dissertation, reflective diatribes and lengthy choruses." From "Gorboduc" is derived its medium of expression, blank verse, and the dumb shows which precede each act. It is worthy of note that the dumb shows, which were the device by which the want of action in "Gorboduc" was remedied,

are not so needful in "Jocasta," which is fuller of event. The versification, in which Gascoigne's work is not especially distinguishable from that of his coadjutor, is smooth, the lines prevailing end-stopped, and characterized by much regularity. While the derivation of the tragedy forbids any criticism of the plot or its conduct, we feel that the characters are at least as distinguishable as those of "Gorboduc" and that Prof. Mahaffy's estimate of "Jocasta" as "a motly and incongruous piece" is perhaps unnecessarily harsh.

For the sake of comparison, I shall quote the following short passage from Euripides and from Gascoigne. It has often been compared with a speech of Hotspur's (also quoted below), which Professor Mahaffy considers Shakespeare's "only direct obligation to Greek tragedy."¹⁸

Ἐγὼ γὰρ οὐδὲν, μήτερ, ἀποκρῦψας ἐρῶ
ἄστρων ἄν' ἐλθοίμ' αἰθέρος πρὸς ἀντολὰς
καὶ γῆς ἐνερθε, δυνατὸς ὦν δρᾶσαι τάδε,
τὴν θεῶν μεγίστην ὄντ' ἔχειν τυραννίδα.¹⁹

"To say the truth (mother) this mind of mine
Doth fleet full farre from that farfetched of his,
Ne will I longer cover my conceit:
If I could rule or reign in heaven above,
And eke commaund in depth of darksome hell,
No toil ne trauell should my spirit abashe
To take the way unto my restlesse will,"²⁰

It need scarcely be premised that the following never came to Shakespeare through Gascoigne.

"By heaven, methinks it were an easy leap
To pluck bright Honor from the pale-faced moon,
Or dive into the bottom of the deep
Where fathom-line could never touch the ground,
And pluck up drowned Honor by the locks;
So he that doth redeem her hence might wear
Without corival all her dignities."²¹

The following parallel may be noted as a matter of minor interest. In the dumb show which precedes the first act of "Jocasta," we find these stage directions: "Enter a king with an imperial crown upon his head very richly apparelled, etc., sitting in a Chariote very richly furnished, drawne in by foure kinges in their Dublettes and Hosen, etc."²² Did Marlowe have this passage in mind in the

¹¹ 'Sh's Predecessors in the Engl. Drama,' p. 217.

¹² Warton mentions the fragment of a translation of "Hercules Oetaeus" as preserved among the Cotton MSS. in the Bodleian Library by no less a hand than Elizabeth's, about 1561. 'Hist. of Engl. Poetry,' iii, p. 318.

¹³ Warton, 'Hist. of Engl. Poetry,' iii, pp. 311-12.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 315; also see Morley's 'First Sketch of Engl. Lit.,' pp. 327-28.

¹⁵ Ward, 'Hist. of Engl. Dramatic Lit.,' i, p. 114.

¹⁶ 'Hist. of Classical Greek Lit.,' i, pp. 165-6; and 'Sh's Predecessors in the Engl. Drama,' pp. 221-22.

¹⁷ See "Jocasta," Hazl. i, p. 258, and Dolce's "Giocasta," as above.

¹⁸ 'Hist. of Classical Greek Lit.,' i, p. 366 note.

¹⁹ "Phoenissae," 503-506. ²⁰ "Jocasta," 2, 1, Hazl. ed. i, p. 287. ²¹ 'Hen. IV.' i, 3, 201. ²² Hazl. ed. i, p. 259,

stage direction: "Enter Tamburlaine drawn in his chariot by the kings of Trebezond and Soria, with bits in their mouths: in his right hand a whip with which he scourgeth them?"²³ Or did both look back to a common original?

II.

Gascoigne's comedy the "Supposes" was performed the same year as "Jocasta," 1566, and at the same place. None of the particulars of these two performances have been handed down to us. However, that the "Supposes" was not unsuccessful is proved by its revival in 1582 at Trinity College, Oxford.²⁴ This play is particularly memorable as the first successful adaptation of an Italian comedy, "the earliest existing specimen of a play in English prose acted either in public or private,"²⁵ and from the fact that from it Shakespeare borrowed the underplot of "The Taming of the Shrew." "It seems peculiarly fitting," says Mr. Symonds, "that our comedy should have begun with a translation of Ariosto's *Suppositi*," which with the same author's "Cassaria" are placed next to the comedies of Macchiavelli by most Italian critics; for Ariosto seems to have been the first who conceived and carried into effect the idea of regular comedies in imitation of the ancients.²⁶

In the "*Suppositi*," says Ginguené, "his second comedy, Ariosto imitates chiefly the 'Captivi' of Plautus and the 'Eunuchus' of Terence";²⁷ and Ward commends the "free imitation of the manner" of the former, the "spirited and natural dialogue" and the graceful spontaneity of Ariosto's flow of language.²⁸

The "Supposes" holds an important place in the early history of English drama; for just as "Ralph Roister Doister" represents the direct contact with classical comedy and "Gammer Gurton's Needle" the emergence of the native comedy from the slough of the formless interlude, the "Supposes" stands as representative of that Italian influence which

²³ Part II, 4, 4.

²⁴ Collier, 'Hist. of Engl. Dramatic Poetry,' iii, p. 6-11.

²⁵ *Ibid.* ²⁶ 'Studies in South Europe,' i, p. 109. See also Hallam 'Lit. of Europe,' i, p. 275, and Ginguené, 'Hist. Litt. d'Italie' ed. Milan 1820, vi, *passim*. ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 180 seqq., where a synopsis of the play will be found. ²⁸ 'Hist. Engl. Dram. Lit.' i, p. 144.

in fuller flood was to become the source of the English Romantic comedy. As is well-known, Ariosto's comedy was first written in prose and afterwards rewritten in *versi sdruccioli* or endecasyllabic blank verse in supposed imitation of the ancients.²⁹ It is the opinion of Collier that Gascoigne took his translation from Ariosto's earlier prose version, but that he adopted some of the changes which Ariosto had introduced when he turned the play into verse. The critic concludes; "Gascoigne has added very little of his own."³⁰

If Gascoigne had the example of Sackville in his adoption of blank verse for tragedy, he certainly appears to have been the first to conceive the practicability of writing comic prose dialogue in English. The innovation of prose as the medium of comedy cannot but be regarded one of the most important steps in the history of the drama; and Gascoigne's use of sprightly prose dialogue in this place closely approaches the excellence of his successor, John Lyly.

Of Shakespeare's indebtedness to Gascoigne, Dr. Hunter speaks as follows:

"One of the most interesting circumstances about this play is that when Shakespeare in the fourth act introduces an incident which is not in the old play, he takes it from Ariosto's comedy entitled *I Suppositi*, as translated by Gascoigne.³¹ . . . My young master and his man exchange habits and characters, and persuade a Scenese, as he is called, to personate the father, exactly as in 'The Taming of the Shrew,' by the pretended danger of his coming from Sienna to Ferrara, contrary to the order of the government."³²

A very careful comparison of the two plays proves more than this, as the whole of Lucentio's subterfuge to obtain his mistress seems borrowed from the "Supposes." There is a similar entanglement in "The Taming of a Shrew," but there the exchange of characters between master and man (Aurelius and Valeria) serves no very coherent purpose, and the impersonation of the father is introduced by no such clever trick as that practised on the Scenese and the pedant of Mantua in the "Supposes" and "The Taming of the Shrew" respectively. In the "Supposes," Erostrato,

²⁹ Ginguené, vi, p. 170.

³⁰ 'Hist. of Engl. Dram. Poetry,' iii, pp. 6 and 7.

³¹ 'New Illustr. of Sh.,' i, p. 352.

³² Farmer 'On the Learning of Sh.,' Malone's 'Sh.,' i, p. 341.

the lover, becomes a servant in the house of his mistress' father, whilst his servant Dulipo impersonates him. In the play attributed to Shakespeare this episode has been alike developed and condensed, by making the lover, Lucentio, become the daughter's tutor. The charming scenes between the lovers, with the duplication of the device in Hortensio, have no counterpart in the 'Supposes.'

Hunter continues:

"The resemblance between certain portions of 'The Taming of the Shrew' and the 'Supposes' of Gascoigne was pointed out first, I believe, by Dr. Farmer, who observes that it was from the 'Supposes' that he [Shakespeare] got the name Petruchio,³³ which he substituted for Ferando, the name of the corresponding character in the old play."³⁴

Mr. Malone adds that it was there also that he found the name of Licio.³⁵ Then comes Tyrwhitt, who suggests that the word supposes in the line:

While counterfeit supposes bleared thine eyne—

is in allusion to the title of Gascoigne's play."³⁶

III.

"The Glasse of Government," Gascoigne's third drama,

"A tragicall comedie so entituled, bycause therein are handled aswell the rewardes of Vertue, as also the punishment of Vices," was published in 1575.³⁷ This play belongs to the 'School-drama,' one of the forms of that wider cycle, "The Prodigal Son." Gascoigne's is the sole representative of this curious class in the history of English literature, although an examination of the writers of Latin comedy in Germany during the sixteenth century discloses more than a score of versions of this popular parable.³⁸ Mr. Hazlitt confesses

³³ Petrucio occurs as the name of one of the Scenese's servants in the "Supposes." See Hazlitt's 'Gascoigne,' i, p. 199.

³⁴ "On the Learning of Sh.," Malone's 'Sh.,' i, p. 346.

³⁵ This name appears in the "Supposes" as Lytio, servant to Philogano. Lucio is one of the guests of Capulet. "R. and J.," I, ii. Cf. further the nurse of the "Supposes" and of "R. and J."

³⁶ See Malone's 'Sh.,' 'The Taming of the Shrew,' V, i, 120, where Tyrwhitt is quoted.

³⁷ Arber is evidently wrong in assigning 1565 as the date of the dedication of this play. See his ed. of 'The Steele Glas,' Chronicle, p. 4.

³⁸ Cf. Holstein's 'Das Drama vom Verlorenen Sohn,' 1880.

his inability to name Gascoigne's model and correctly declaring the style and construction as both un-English, suggests that "some of the incidents are in the manner of the early Latin dramatists."³⁹ Fortunately Mr. C. H. Herford, in his 'Studies in the Literary Relations of England and Germany,' has worked up the subject of the 'School-drama,' and thrown a flood of light upon this play and its originals. It remains for me to avail myself of Mr. Herford's interesting researches and here to acknowledge my debt to him.⁴⁰

Mr. Herford begins by noting two peculiarities in Gascoigne's use of the Roman situations:

"There is an obvious attempt (1) to combine with them a pronounced Christian moral; and (2) to associate them with the life of a modern university."

Then follows a *résumé* of the dramatic versions of the parable of the Prodigal Son in Germany from Macropedius' "Asotus," 1510, and Gnapheus' "Acolastus," 1529, to Stymmelius', "Studentes," 1549. Mr. Herford dwells on the great popularity of several of these plays and the number of editions through which both the "Acolastus" and the "Studentes" ran, thus leaving little doubt of the European celebrity of both plays. He adds that "all three dramatists must have been well known, at least by name and reputation, in the University circles to which Gascoigne belonged"; and calls attention to Gascoigne's presence in Holland, the actual scene of several of these plays. As further evidence Mr. Herford writes as follows:—

"Some parts of the plot, for instance the episode of the Markgrave, show familiarity with its [Antwerp's] institutions, and the figure of Eccho, a gay fellow 'known to all the town,' has something of the air of a portrait. Gascoigne's attested knowledge of Dutch itself involved a certain acquaintance with Dutch society and its current literature.

The external evidence then rather favors the view that Gascoigne was not a stranger to works connected by so close an affinity with his own. . . . Distinct copy of any one of them of course it is not; it is written throughout with a different bias; it is the work of a Calvinist, not a Catholic, or of a Lutheran; it is in the vernacular, not in Latin; in prose, not

³⁹ Hazlitt's 'Gascoigne,' ii, p. 347.

⁴⁰ For a synopsis of this play, see Herford, p. 150.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 152. ⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 152-158.

in verse. For all that, however, it assuredly belongs to the same dramatic cycle; it is an attempt, that is, to connect *Terentian situation* with a *Christian moral* in a picture of *school-life*."⁴³

Then follows a detailed examination of the relation of "The Glasse of Government" to the three plays mentioned, for which the reader must be referred to Mr. Herford's own words; this is his conclusion:

"There are plausible grounds for supposing that one of the most respectable pioneers of the great age of the English drama stood for a moment in literary contact with the most original Latin dramatists of the previous generation; that he met with their writings either in England, where they were in any case known by repute, or during the Dutch journey which immediately preceded the writing of his own play; and that he learned from them what no Roman or English dramatist could then have taught him,—the idea of a 'Glass of Government' in which the unsavory world of Roman comedy is boldly adopted with a Christian purpose, while the story of the biblical Prodigal is worked out, much enlarged and still more extensively 'amended,' in the sphere of the modern school."⁴⁴

There remains little to add. Mr. Herford has pointed out Thomas Ingleland's "The Disobedient Child" as the only other English version of the Prodigal Son, and called attention to a more distant parallel in Woode's "Conflict of Conscience."⁴⁵ Possibly considering the manner in which the theme of repentance is set aside in "The Glasse of Government" for that of a contrast between a virtuous and a vicious life in the young, the more familiar drama "Eastward Ho!" may offer as distinct a parallel.⁴⁶ The general theme finally received a vivid pictorial treatment at the hands of Hogarth in his series of 'pictured morals,' entitled 'Industry and Idleness.'⁴⁷

Aside from its origin and unique position in English literature, "The Glasse of Government" is really a remarkable play; excellent, if over regular in construction, rapid and logical in its movement, and clear in character-drawing. It is pervaded by the same sincere moral tone which has given "The Steele Glas" its popularity, but, barring the lengthy dis-

courses of Gnomaticus, is rarely inartistic. The comedy scenes are characterized by much lightness of touch and fidelity to nature, and the dialogue is worthy the translator of "I Suppositi."

In Gascoigne's day the drama was not yet out of foreign leading-strings, and the paths of Seneca, of Ariosto or of Plautus and Terence were the only paths in which its infant feet could tread. The dramatic career of Gascoigne is especially interesting from his varied choice of models; though not yet strong enough to stand alone, he sought for final independence through many guides. In the next generation Gascoigne would have been a great dramatist, as much beyond his actual achievements as these achievements are above these of his friend, Whetstone. As it is, he is memorable for the earliest specimen of a tragedy in English founded, however remotely, on a Greek original, the earliest existing specimen of an English comedy in prose, and the only example of the "School-drama" in the vernacular of England.

FELIX E. SCHELLING.

University of Pennsylvania.

NOTES ON MORRIS AND SKEAT'S 'SPECIMENS OF EARLY ENGLISH.'

In Vols. i and ii of MOD. LANG. NOTES, were some excellent notes and emendations by Prof. Egge, which I trust will have due weight with the compilers when preparing a new edition. But in going through these volumes I have added a number of other corrections and suggestions, a part of which I here submit for consideration.

Vol. i, p. 3, l. 37, *wene we*. This is a question: 'May we at all call him mother, do we think? Yea we may.' Prof. Egge's surprise that the compilers have uselessly increased the difficulties of the text by reproducing the eccentric punctuation of the MSS., is shared, I should think, by most teachers.

P. 5. l. 121, *sorige and gelice deað*. The context shows that we should read *gristlice*, instead of the unmeaning *gelice*. L. 127. The interpolated *and* is superfluous. 'As our Saviour instructed them, they taught many things.'

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 159-160. ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

⁴⁵ The plays are reprinted in Hazlitt's 'Dodsley,' vols. ii and vi. ⁴⁶ Cunningham's 'Chapman,' Plays, p. 450 seqq.

⁴⁷ 'A set of Twelve Plates,' published in 1747.